WORKING IN GROUPS

SEVENTH EDITION

ISA N. ENGLEBERG | DIANNA R. WYNN

Working in Groups

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Working in Groups

Communication Principles and Strategies

Seventh Edition

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Preface

One central question has always guided our research and writing for *Working in Groups*:

> What do college students enrolled in a group communication course *really* need to know?

Our guiding question led us to include both classic and current theories of group communication that focus on "how groups work" as well as practical group communication strategies and skills that emphasize "how to work in groups."

Unified Perspective: Balance and Group Dialectics

Beginning with the first edition of *Working in Groups,* we have used the concept of **balance** as a central metaphor for learning how to work in groups. A group that reaches a decision or completes a task is not in balance if group members dislike or mistrust one another. A group that relies on two or three members to do all the work is not in balance. Effective groups balance factors such as task and social maintenance functions, individual and group needs, and leadership and followership.

We further developed the balance metaphor into a unique model of **group dialectics**—the interplay of opposing or contradictory forces inherent in group work. A dialectic approach examines how group members negotiate and resolve the tensions and pressures they encounter while working together to achieve a common goal. We apply contemporary theories and research to illuminate the nine group dialectics that characterize the delicate balance achieved by effective groups.

Group Dialectics

Individual Goals	↔	**Group Goals**
Conflict	↔	**Cohesion**
Conforming	↔	**Nonconforming**
Task Dimensions	↔	**Social Dimensions**
Homogeneous	↔	**Heterogeneous**
Leadership	↔	**Followership**
Structure	↔	**Spontaneity**
Engaged	↔	**Disengaged**
Open System	↔	**Closed System**

Comprehensive Topic Coverage

The Seventh Edition of *Working in Groups* strengthens the text's scholarship and applicability. Review the detailed table of contents to get a feel for the depth and breadth of topic coverage. We include **classic and traditional group communication** subject matter, such as

- Group Development
- Member Diversity
- Verbal and Nonverbal Communication
- Decision Making and Problem Solving
- Group Norms and Roles
- Leadership Theories and Power
- Group Cohesiveness and Conflict
- Planning and Conducting Meetings

We also include **cutting-edge theories, research, and communication strategies,** such as

- Group Dialectics and Balance
- "Team Talk" Strategies and Skills
- Communication Apprehension in Groups
- Communication Ethics in Groups
- Group Goal Setting and Motivation
- Adapting to Group Diversity
- Group Deliberation
- Virtual Teams
- Argumentation in Groups
- Brownell's HURIER Listening Model
- Personality Traits in Groups
- Decision-Making Styles
- 5M Model of Effective Leadership
- The Collective Intelligence of Groups

Pedagogical Features

The pedagogical features of this Seventh Edition that link the theories of group communication (how groups work) with related communication strategies and skills (how to work in groups) include the following:

Case Studies

Provided at the beginning of every chapter, **original case studies** and accompanying questions enable students to

anticipate, discuss, and apply chapter content. The case study questions do not offer a single or correct answer; rather, they ask students to apply what they learn in the chapter and to explore what they believe are appropriate responses to the case study questions.

Video Scenarios

Incorporated into the first 11 chapters, **video scenarios** highlight important group communication theories, strategies, and skills. Instructors can use these videos to supplement classroom lectures and discussions, as the basis for exam questions, or as cases for analysis.

Groups in Balance

The **Groups in Balance** feature calls attention to group dialectics and the need to balance the contradictory forces inherent in all group work. The feature also examines the ways in which groups negotiate and resolve a variety of tensions using a both/and approach. Many of the Groups in Balance features are new or revised for the Seventh Edition.

Theory in Groups

Throughout this edition, we use the **Theory in Groups** feature to explain why groups succeed or fail and how related strategies and skills in this book can enhance group effectiveness. Many of the theories in the Seventh Edition are revised or new to the text.

Ethics in Groups

Every chapter includes an **Ethics in Groups** feature that examines the many ethical issues and dilemmas that frequently arise when interdependent group members collaborate with one another to achieve a common goal.

Virtual Teams

In each chapter, the **Virtual Teams** feature offers strategies and skills to help groups and members achieve common goals both in mediated face-to-face settings and in virtual teams that communicate across time, distance, and organizational boundaries.

GroupWork

GroupWork features in each chapter demonstrate and apply group communication principles in structured individual and/or interactive activities. This feature offers personal insights and opportunities for critically thinking about the ways in which related theories, strategies, and skills affect how and why group members collaborate with one another to achieve a common goal.

Group Assessment

Group Assessment features provide new and revised measures for evaluating student and group understanding of important theories, strategies, and skills.

End-of-Chapter Summary and Quiz Questions

Chapter **Summary Sections** review the major concepts in each chapter. Students should be able to explain and apply summary statements to a variety of group situations and contexts.

End-of-chapter **Quiz Questions** link to chapter learning outcomes and give students the opportunity to assess their understanding, application, analysis, and evaluation of chapter content.

New to this Edition

The Seventh Edition of *Working in Groups* includes up-to-date research and expanded coverage of contemporary topics that build on our tradition of intellectual rigor, practical focus, and commitment to student learning.

- **Updated, contemporary approaches to traditional topics** such as group roles, listening, leadership, conflict resolution, and problem solving
- **Expanded and updated sections on virtual teams and communication technology** in every chapter, with an emphasis on applying group theory, strategies, and skills to working in virtual teams
- **Greater focus on collaboration and deliberation** as vital components of group effectiveness
- **Expanded topic coverage** focusing on successfully resolving conflict, avoiding groupthink, managing problematic group members, preparing for team presentations, and using parliamentary procedure
- Updated sections on **adapting to group diversity** incorporated throughout most chapters, with contemporary research on gender and intercultural communication
- **New Theories, Research, and Practical Applications:** Collective Intelligence; Gender and Leadership; Cultural Synergy; Cosmopolitanism and Ethics; The 4Rs of Conflict Management; Group Deliberation and Decision Making; The Progressive Problem-Solving Method; Organizational Culture and Problem Solving; Deliberative Argumentation; A Parliamentary Procedure Primer
- **Excerpts from text-specific video scenarios** applicable to specific sections of chapters followed by related questions for group discussion or writing assignments

- **Revised learning objectives** for every chapter and linked to specific chapter content, as well as the end-of-chapter summary and quiz questions

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- **Instructor Manual:** includes chapter summary, learning objectives, handouts and additional resources.
- **Test Bank:** includes additional questions beyond the REVEL in multiple choice and essay response—formats.
- **PowerPoint Presentation:** provides a core template of the content covered throughout the text. Can easily be added to customize for your classroom.
- **MyTest:** Create custom quizzes and exams using the Test Bank questions. You can print these exams for in-class use. Visit: http://www.pearsonhighered.com/mytest

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Isa Engleberg and Dianna Wynn

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Working in Groups

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Group Communication

Like most successful groups, formation skydiving requires the collaboration of three or more interdependent members working to achieve a common goal.

Learning Objectives

1.1 Explain why employers consistently rank teamwork and the ability to collaborate with others as essential skills

1.2 Explain the importance of the five key elements in the definition of group communication

1.3 Compare the advantages and disadvantages of working in groups

1.4 Describe how understanding the components of the group communication process can enhance group effectiveness

1.5 Explain how successful groups balance various dialectic tensions by using a collaborative both/and approach

1.6 Practice the ethical principles included in the National Communication Association's Credo for Ethical Communication

Case Study: The Study Group Dilemma

Grace has always wanted to be a pediatric nurse. When she was accepted into the nursing program at a local college, she looked forward to studying for her dream job. However, her first day in Anatomy and Physiology class turned her hopes into fears. Her professor explained that every student must learn and understand the significance of more than 15,000 terms! As she looked around the classroom, she could see that many of the other new nursing majors seemed just as stunned as she was.

After class was over, she walked down the hallway with four classmates. The mood was gloomy. After an uncomfortable period of silence, one of the other students suggested that they form a study group. Grace had her doubts. She thought, "A study group will just take up a lot of my time and energy with no guarantee that it will help me earn a good grade. As much as I'd like to get to know these students better, I can probably learn more by studying alone. Besides, what if we don't get along? What if I end up doing most of the work or the others don't show up?"

Grace's concerns—like those of many people—are understandable. Groups use a lot of time, energy, and resources. In some cases, a single person can accomplish just as much or more by working alone. And even if a study group has the potential to aid learning, it also has the potential for interpersonal conflicts and long-lasting resentments.

Critical Thinking Questions

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer the following critical thinking questions:

1. Given Grace's concerns about spending a lot of her valuable time and energy in a study group, what would you say to encourage her to join?
2. What communication strategies should a study group use to ensure that members are satisfied with the group experience?
3. Which dialectic tensions are most likely to affect how well Grace and her study group achieves its goal?
4. Is it ethical for a study group to work together in order to improve their chances of earning a good grade when other students in the same class study alone? If yes, why? If not, why not?

1.1: The Importance of Groups

1.1 Explain why employers consistently rank teamwork and the ability to collaborate with others as essential skills

All of us work in groups—at school, on the job, in voluntary organizations, and in interactive leisure activities. Depending on the situation, group members can be family members, friends, colleagues, and new acquaintances. Meeting locations range from sports fields and battlefields to courtrooms and classrooms, and even from cyberspace to outer space.

Individual performance was once the measure of personal achievement, but success in today's complex world depends on your ability to work in groups. Researchers Steve Kozlowski and Daniel Ilgen describe our profound dependence on groups:

> Teams of people working together for a common cause touch all of our lives. From everyday activities like air travel, fire fighting, and running the United Way drive to amazing feats of human accomplishments like climbing Mt. Everest and reaching for the stars, teams are at the center of how work gets done in modern times.[1]

Working in groups may be the most important skill you learn in college. A study commissioned by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) asked employers to rank essential learning outcomes needed by college graduates entering the workplace. In two of four major categories ("Intellectual and Practical Skills" and "Personal and Social Responsibility"), the top-ranked outcome was "teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others in diverse group settings." Recent graduates ranked the same learning outcomes as top priorities.[2] A business executive in the same study wrote that they look for employees who "are good team people over anything else. I can teach the technical."[3] In another major study, employers identified group-related communication skills as more important than written communication, proficiency in the field of study, and computer skills.[4]

Group Assessment Group Communication Competencies Survey[5]

What are the critical group communication skills identified by employers? Fortunately, there are many research-based competencies that characterize effective group member behavior. As a way of introducing you to the theories, strategies, and skills in this text, assess the importance of each of the competencies presented in the *Group Communication Competencies Survey*.

Directions: On a 5-point scale, where 5 is "Extremely Important" and 1 is "Not at All Important," rate the following group competencies in terms of their importance for becoming an *effective* group member. *Select only one number for each item.* When you are finished, ask yourself this question: How competent am *I* in the "Extremely Important" areas?

Group Competencies	5 Extremely Important	4 Very Important	3 Somewhat Important	2 Not Very Important	1 Not at All Important
1. Reduce your nervousness when speaking in a discussion or meeting.					
2. Understand, respect, and adapt to diverse group members.					
3. Communicate openly and honestly.					
4. Assume critical task roles (ask questions and analyze ideas) and social maintenance roles (motivate and support members).					
5. Influence group members to change their attitudes and/or behavior.					
6. Correctly interpret and appropriately respond to members' feelings.					
7. Develop clear group goals.					
8. Listen appropriately and effectively to other members.					
9. Intervene appropriately to resolve member and group problems.					
10. Develop positive interpersonal relationships with group members.					
11. Manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts.					
12. Develop and follow a well-organized meeting agenda.					
13. Actively contribute to group discussions.					
14. Use gestures, body language, facial expressions, and eye contact effectively.					
15. Demonstrate effective leadership skills.					
16. Research and share important ideas and information with group members.					
17. Use presentation aids and presentation software (PowerPoint) effectively.					
18. Plan and conduct effective meetings.					
19. Use appropriate procedures for group decision making and problem solving.					
20. Ask questions to clarify ideas and get needed information.					
21. Motivate group members.					
22. Use assertiveness strategies and skills confidently and effectively.					
23. Respect and adapt to group norms (standards of behavior).					
24. Promote equal participation in discussions by all members.					
25. Prepare and deliver an effective presentation or oral report.					
26. Use appropriate and effective words in a group discussion.					
27. Use effective technologies and skills to communicate in virtual teams.					
28. Develop and present valid arguments and opinions in a group discussion.					
29. Provide appropriate emotional support to group members.					
30. Other strategies or skills: a. _____ b. _____ c. _____					

1.2: Defining Group Communication

1.2 Explain the importance of the five key elements in the definition of group communication

When does a collection of people become a group? Do people talking in an elevator or discussing the weather at an airport constitute a group? Are the members of a church congregation listening to a sermon or fans cheering at a baseball game a group? Although the people in these examples are groups, they are not necessarily working for or with other members.

There are two basic uses of the word *group.* The first describes people brought together by a circumstance, such as a group of fans at a sporting event or concert, a group of people waiting in line for a bus or at airport check-in, or a group assembled at a political rally or a wedding. The second use of the word identifies a group as people who interact with one another to accomplish something. (Table 1.1) In this textbook, we concentrate on the second meaning in which group members are highly focused and dependent on communication. We define **group communication** as the collaboration of three or more interdependent members working to achieve a common goal.

Table 1.1 Shared Goals OR Shared Circumstances

Examples	Classification
People who work with their neighbors to pick up trash on Earth Day	People who interact with one another to accomplish a shared goal
People discussing the weather at an airport	People brought together by a shared circumstance
People who are members of a church congregation listening to a sermon	People brought together by a shared circumstance
People who get together to choose a scholarship winner from among high school honors students	People who interact with one another to accomplish a shared goal
People who get together to watch a Presidential candidates' debate on television	People brought together by a shared circumstance

Although people frequently assemble in a variety of circumstances and settings, group members who actively collaborate with one another to achieve a shared goal have the most influence and impact on their own lives and the lives of others. When describing group communication, we use the terms *group* and *team* interchangeably. Thus, a group of friends organizing an annual block party can be just as diligent and productive as a corporate team organizing and conducting a stockholders' meeting. Although we don't call a football team a football group or family members a team (unless they're playing a sport or game together), we can safely say that all of these people are working together in order to achieve a common goal.

1.2.1: Key Elements of Group Communication

The Green Bay Packers have won more championships than any other team in National Football League history. How do the Packers exemplify the definition of group communication: the collaboration of three or more interdependent members working to achieve a common goal?

Now, let's break down our definition into the five essential components of group communication shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Components of Group Communication

THREE OR MORE MEMBERS The saying "Two's company, three's a crowd" recognizes that a conversation between two people is fundamentally different from a three-person discussion. If two people engage in a conversation, Jill communicates with Jack and Jack communicates with Jill.

But if a third person is added, the dynamics change: A third person can be the listener who judges and influences the content and style of the conversation. While two group members talk, support, or criticize one another, a third person can offer alternatives and make a tie-breaking decision if the other two people can't agree. We do not identify two people as a group because researchers note that two people working together perform at about the same level as the same two people working alone.[6]

As the size of a group increases, the number of possible interactions (and potential misunderstandings) increases exponentially. For example, a group with five members has the potential for 90 different interactions; if you add just two members, a group of seven has the potential for 966 different interactions.[7]

At this point, you may wonder whether there is an ideal group size.

The answer is: It depends. It depends on members' knowledge, attitudes, and skills; on the nature and needs of the task; and—most importantly—on the group's common goal. Fortunately, researchers have looked at the group-size question and given us some useful guidelines:

- Most group members and leaders prefer groups of three to nine members.
- Groups larger than nine members are generally less productive.[8]
- Groups of five to seven members are generally more effective for *problem-solving* discussions.
- To avoid tied votes, an odd number of members is usually better than an even number.

Smaller groups are generally more effective than larger groups. As group size increases, cohesion and effective collaboration decreases, and members tend to divide into subgroups. In large groups, members are more argumentative, less unified, and more competitive than cooperative. Some members may feel left out or inconsequential, and as a result, member satisfaction decreases as group size increases.[9] The best advice is the simplest: limit "group size to the smallest number of members necessary to accomplish group goals."[10]

Many organizations have learned the importance of creating groups in a size most likely to achieve specific goals. For example, successful megachurches in the United States may have thousands of members in their congregations, but small groups are often the key to their success. Church members are encouraged to create or join tightly knit groups of five to seven people who meet in a member's home to pray and support one another in times of need. Worshipers match their interests with those of other group members—new parents, retired accountants, mountain bike riders—and use their commonalities as the basis for religious discussions, member support, and volunteer projects. Thus, although successful megachurches boast large congregations that share a common belief system, they rely on the motivation, comfort, and work of small groups to sustain religious faith and church membership.[11]

WRITING PROMPT

Key Elements of Group Communication

Think about the task groups in which you've been a member. Choose one or two examples and explain how the size of the group and the nature of the task affected its ability to achieve a common goal.

▶ **The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.**

Submit

COLLABORATION Collaboration is a fairly common word that encompasses such behaviors as coordination, cooperation, interaction, and teamwork. In groups, **collaboration** is characterized by coordinated group interaction in which members share a common goal, respect others' perspectives and contributions, and work together to create a successful group experience.

Effective collaboration ensures that members share relevant information and opinions, make responsible decisions, and develop positive interpersonal relationships. The way in which group members communicate does more than reveal group dynamics; it creates them.[12] Members learn which behaviors are appropriate, and which are inappropriate. Whether members meet face to face or in cyberspace, effective group communication requires collaboration.

INTERDEPENDENCE **Interdependence** refers to the influence of each group member on the thoughts and actions of other members. A successful group with interdependent members functions as a cohesive team in which all members feel responsible for doing their part. The failure of a single group member can adversely affect the entire group. For example, if one student in a study group fails to read and explain an important section of an assigned chapter, the entire group will be unprepared for questions related to the material covered in that chapter. Few tasks can be accomplished by a group without information, advice, support, and assistance from its interdependent members.

WORKING **Working** describes the physical and/or mental effort group members expend when trying to accomplish something. That "something" can be a social goal, such as getting friends together for a surprise party;

a family goal, such as deciding jointly where to go on vacation; a medical team's goal of planning training sessions for improving patient care; or a management goal, in which group members develop a strategic plan for their organization.

Working in a group is not about hard labor. Rather, when we work effectively in groups, we join others in a productive and motivating experience in which members combine their talents and energy to achieve a worthy goal.

COMMON GOAL Group members come together for a reason. Their collective reason defines and unifies the group. A group's **common goal** represents the shared purpose or objective toward which group work is directed. A group's goal guides its actions, sets standards for measuring success, provides a focus for resolving conflict, and motivates members. Large-scale studies have found that a clear common goal is the most significant factor separating successful groups from unsuccessful groups.[13]

It doesn't matter whether you call it a goal, an objective, a purpose, a mission, an assignment, or a vision. Without a common goal, group members would have difficulty answering several critical questions: Why are we meeting? Why should we care or work hard? Where are we going? How will we know when we get there?

Some groups have the freedom to develop their own goals. For example, a gathering of neighbors may meet to discuss ways of reducing crime in the neighborhood, or nursing students may form a study group to prepare for and do well on an upcoming exam. Other goals are assigned. A marketing instructor may require a semester-long project to assess a student group's ability to develop a marketing campaign. An industrial company may assemble a group of employees with the purpose of developing recommendations for safer storage of hazardous chemicals. Whatever the circumstances, effective groups work to accomplish a common goal.

Theory in Groups

Systems Theory

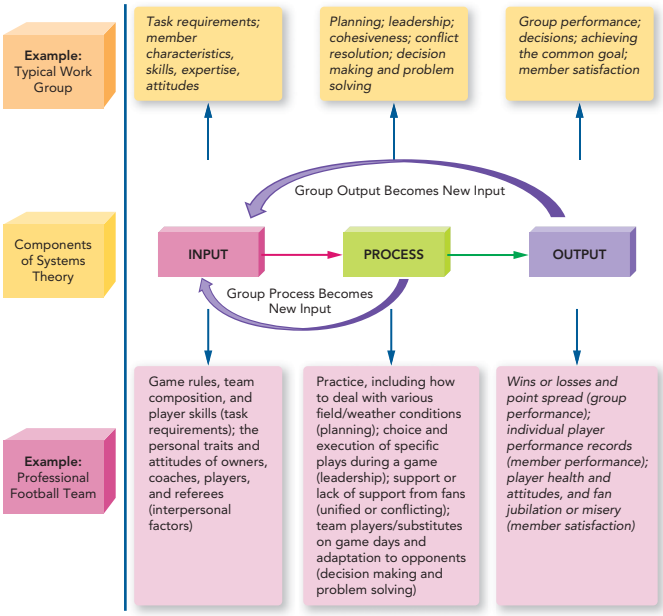
Objective: Provide an example that shows how the Input-Process-Output Model of Systems Theory demonstrates the complex nature of group communication.

Systems Theory (Figure 1.2) encompasses a group of theories that examines how interdependent factors affect one another in a complex environment. In communication studies, Systems Theory recognizes that "communication does not take place in isolation, but rather necessitates a communication system."[14]

Every group we describe in this textbook is a **system**, a collection of interacting and interdependent elements working together to form a complex whole that adapts to a changing environment. However, groups are not the only systems in our lives. In biology, we study the digestive system, the nervous system, and the immune system, and recognize that when one of these biological systems fails, it can affect the others with serious or even deadly consequences. We embrace the democratic system of government, marvel at our solar system, and hope that our computer system doesn't crash.

One way of looking at groups and systems is through Input-Process-Output (I-P-O) models. *Inputs* come from both outside the group and within the group. *Process* takes place within the group as it works to achieve its common goal. *Output,* the results of input and process, can influence future input and processes. Understanding how your group functions as a system is just as important as doing your personal best in helping your group succeed.

Figure 1.2 Components of Systems Theory



WRITING PROMPT

Systems Theory

Identify the input, process, and output of a college study group, and explain how the group's process and output can affect input.

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Submit

1.2.2: Types of Groups

Like their individual members, groups have diverse characteristics and goals. Although a basketball team, a study group, a corporate board of directors, and a homecoming

committee are groups in which interdependent members collaborate with one another to achieve a common goal, each one has unique features and functions.

The most common types of groups fall into eight categories that span a wide range of groups, from the most personal and informal types of groups to more formal, structured types. You can identify each type of group (**primary**, **social**, **self-help**, **learning**, **service**, **civic**, **organizational**, and **public**) by observing its purpose (why the group meets) and examples of membership (who is in the group), as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Types of Groups

Type of Group	Purpose	Examples of Membership
Primary	To provide members with affection, support, and a sense of belonging	Family, best friends
Social	To share common interests in a friendly setting or participate in social activities	Athletic team, college sororities and fraternities
Self-Help	To support and encourage members who want or need help with personal problems	Therapy groups, Weight Watchers
Learning	To help members gain knowledge and develop skills	Study groups, ceramics workshops
Service	To assist worthy causes that help other people *outside* the group	Kiwanis, charity or volunteer groups
Civic	To support worthy causes that help people *within* the group	Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), neighborhood associations
Organizational	To achieve specific goals on behalf of a business or organization	Management teams, committees
Public	To discuss important issues in front of or for the benefit of the public	Open-to-the-public panel discussions, governance groups

The eight types of groups are not absolute categories. Many of them overlap. A Girl Scout belongs to both a social group and a learning group, and their scout leaders, who operate under the direction of the national association, belong to both a service group and an organizational group. The last two types of groups in Table 1.2—organizational groups and public groups—serve the interests of recognized organizations and public audiences.

Organizational groups may have goals as complex as reengineering a global corporation or as simple as sharing relevant information at a weekly staff meeting. Most organizational groups work within a system that has its own rules, vocabulary, levels of power, and member responsibilities. If you are employed, you probably belong to several organizational groups. You may be a member of a production team or a work crew. You may belong to a sales staff, service department, management group, or research team.

As noted in Table 1.2, public group members interact in front of or for the benefit of the public. Although public groups may engage in information sharing, decision making, or problem solving, they are also concerned with making a positive impression on a public audience.

Virtual Teams
Groups in Cyberspace

Objective: List the fundamental requirements of an effective virtual team, regardless of the medium or media members use to collaborate with one another.

Today, regardless of when or where you work in groups, you already do or inevitably will participate as the member of a virtual team. **Virtual teams** rely on one or more mediated technologies to collaborate, often across time, distance, and organizational boundaries.

Thousands of miles and several time zones may separate virtual team members, whereas others work in the same room using technology to collaborate on a group project. Diverse and geographically distributed teams are now the model for businesses and governments around the world. In fact, research concludes that "with rare exceptions all organizational teams are virtual to some extent."[15]

Virtual teams are everywhere. At least 75 percent of U.S. companies allow employees to work remotely—and that number is expected to increase significantly.[16] Surveys of multinational corporations reported that 80 percent of the respondents were part of a virtual team; 63 percent indicated that about half of these teams were located in other countries. In one survey of major corporations, 52 percent reported that virtual teams are used by top management, and 79 percent are used for project teams.[17] Some companies—with names such as Art & Logic, Automattic, Basecamp, and peopleG2—operate completely or mostly in virtual teams.[18]

The increasing prevalence of virtual teams creates new challenges: Employees rated tasks such as managing conflict, making decisions, expressing opinions, and generating innovative ideas as more difficult in virtual teams than in face-to-face meetings. In addition, 95 percent reported that their greatest challenge was overcoming the inability to read nonverbal behavior in text-only contexts. And 90 percent said they don't have enough time during virtual meetings to build relationships. The top-rated characteristics of an effective virtual teammate include:

1. a willingness to share relevant information,
2. active engagement and interaction with others, and
3. the ability to collaborate.

These are also essential communication competencies needed by the members of all groups—whether meeting face to face or via cyberspace with members across the globe.[19]

Groups must balance the advantages and disadvantages of using technology. On the one hand, organizations spend billions of dollars on technology that allows employees to communicate with one another, collaborate on projects, and participate in virtual meetings. On the other hand, "hundreds of millions of those dollars will be wasted chasing fads and installing technology that people will use to work the same way they worked before the technology was installed."[20]

Virtual teams are complex. Members may come from a variety of organizations, cultures, time zones, and geographic locations, not to mention the many technologies they can use. For example, their levels of experience and expertise in using a particular virtual medium may vary. They may also have computer systems with different capabilities, such as older or newer versions of the software being used for group communication. As a result, virtual teams develop distinct group dynamics compared to groups that meet face to face.[21]

In addition to the ones you know best (email, social media tools, instant messaging, and frequently-used video and audio conferencing systems), hundreds of commercially available tools help virtual teams manage their work in different time/space configurations. Table 1.3 provides examples of virtual team products by function. By the time you read this list, there are sure to be new, improved, and more innovative tools for groups to use. Have you used any of these tools? Did they help or hinder your group? What other products would you add to the list?

Table 1.3 Virtual Tools for Virtual Teams[22]

Function	Sample Products
Collaboration	Redbooth, Slack, Blackboard Collaborate
Project Management	Microsoft Project, Basecamp, Primavera
Document Storage/File Sharing	Dropbox, Google Drive, Share Point
Electronic Meetings	WebEx, GoToMeetings, Google Hangouts
High-End Video Conferencing	Cisco Telepresence, Polycrom Telepresence, Logitech LifeSize
Meeting Schedulers	Doodle, Timebride, ScheduleOnce
Document Co-Creation	Google Docs, Prezi, Conceptboard

Whether you welcome the benefits of working in virtual teams or not, they are here to stay. These powerful tools will become increasingly prevalent in all types of groups. Certainly, in organizational environments, virtual teams will become "the norm in conducting business."[23] To help you succeed in these groups, we offer strategies and skills throughout this textbook that focus on working effectively and efficiently in virtual environments. The following are fundamental requirements for an effective virtual team:

- adequate resources (funding, people, skills, etc.) to achieve a group's common goal,
- appropriate and effective information technology and support,
- members with adequate and appropriate electronic communication skills,
- members with adequate and appropriate collaboration skills suited to a mediated environment, and
- members who serve as role models for others in virtual interactions.[24]

1.3: Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Groups

1.3 Compare the advantages and disadvantages of working in groups

If you're like most people, you probably have suffered through at least one long, boring meeting run by an unskilled and incompetent leader. Perhaps you have lost patience with a group that couldn't accomplish a simple task that you could do easily by yourself. Even so, the potential advantages of working in effective groups far outweigh the disadvantages.

Let's begin by acknowledging several certainties about group work. There is no question that some tasks are impossible for one person to complete alone. Prehistoric people joined together in groups to hunt large, ferocious animals and to protect their families and clan. Today, we form groups to build skyscrapers and rocket ships, to perform life-saving surgery and classical symphonies, and to play football games and clean up oil spills.

In our daily lives, we also rely on smaller groups such as mobile emergency medical teams, study groups, neighborhood safety committees, coaching staffs, and our families to make decisions and solve problems. Do these groups do a better job than one person can? If the group is poorly organized, lacks a clear goal, and includes unmotivated members with limited or inappropriate knowledge and skills, the answer is no. However, when groups work effectively, efficiently, and ethically, they have the potential to outperform individuals working alone and can make significant contributions to the quality of our lives. The critical question is not, "Are groups better than individuals?" Rather, ask yourself this: "How can we become a more effective group?"[25]

GroupWork It Was the Best of Teams, It Was the Worst of Teams

Directions: This activity is designed to help you identify some of the advantages and disadvantages of working in groups based on your own experiences and the experiences of others. Consider one of the groups in which you have worked. Then think about what you liked and disliked about working in that group. Now you should be able to identify characteristics unique to the best groups and worst groups.

The Best of Teams

Example: One member kept track of everyone's birthday. On the meeting day closest to a birthday, we presented a card signed by everyone and shared a cake or cookies.

1.

2.

3.

4.

The Worst of Teams

Example: The boss or leader refused to explain her decisions. When we'd ask why we could or couldn't do something, she'd say, "Because I said so."

1.

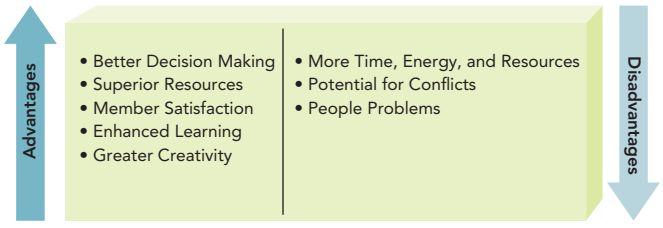
2.

3.

4.

Figure 1.3 notes that, in most cases, the potential advantages of group collaboration far outweigh the potential disadvantages.

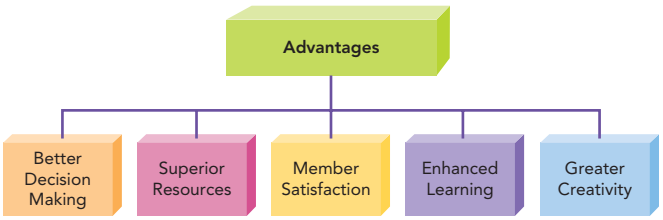
Figure 1.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Groups



1.3.1: Advantages of Working in Groups

The advantages of working in groups (Figure 1.4) outweigh the disadvantages when group members collaborate effectively with one another in pursuit of a common goal. The first two advantages—Better Decision Making and Superior Resources—are the most obvious. What you may not have considered are the ways in which group communication can enhance member satisfaction, learning, and creativity.

Figure 1.4 Advantages of Working in Groups



BETTER DECISION MAKING Do groups or individuals perform better and make better decisions? The answer is: It depends. When a task is fairly simple and routine (e.g., write a memo, total the day's receipts), an individual working alone may perform it as well as or better than a group. A simple, routine task such as putting stamps on envelopes does not require a group because collaboration and interdependence are unnecessary. Even a more difficult task or problem that has one right answer may be solved more easily by a smart person or expert working alone than by a group. However, when a task is complex and the answers or solutions are unclear or require an understanding of multiple perspectives, a group has the potential to do a better job than individuals working alone.

Once researchers understood the types of jobs that groups do best, their findings were nearly universal: groups usually outperform the average of their members' individual judgments.[26] Of course, there are exceptions. In a "bad" group of poorly chosen or too-busy members lacking sufficient information, motivation, and structured techniques, failure is likely.

SUPERIOR RESOURCES Every group member brings a wide variety of resources, including different life experiences, special expertise, and unique perspectives as well as ideas, information, and opinions about a variety of issues. When group members share what they know and what they believe, it broadens and enriches the group's knowledge base. These collective ideas, information, and perspectives are likely to result in better-informed, more meaningful, and more effective group decision making and problem solving. With rare exceptions, a group has more and better resources to call upon than an individual working alone.

MEMBER SATISFACTION The social benefits of group work can be just as important as task achievement. People belong to and work in groups because groups give them the opportunity to make friends, socialize, receive peer support, and feel part of a unified and successful team. Not surprisingly, the more opportunities group members have to communicate with one another, the more satisfied they are with the group experience.